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### Five Minute Chats on Our Presidents

By JAMES MORGAN

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#### AN UNHAPPY PRESIDENT

1788—John Adams elected vice president.  
1792—Re-elected vice president.  
1796—Elected president.  
1797—Inaugurated second president, aged 61.  
1800—Concluded peace with France. Defeated for second term by Jefferson.  
1820—Member of Massachusetts constitutional convention.  
1826—July 4, died, aged 90.

PROBABLY John Adams was the unhappiest man who ever sat in the presidential chair. One of a dozen unwanted presidents, who were taken only because the men that were wanted could not be elected, this humble role embittered all the remaining days of the proudest man in the line of our chief magistrates.

It was hard enough for Adams to be the understudy even of George Washington, while serving as vice president. When he became president it was maddening to his ego that he should be expected to play second fiddle to Alexander Hamilton, the master spirit of the old governing class, left over from colonial times and which controlled the Federalist party.

The president made the fatal mistake of keeping Washington's cabinet.

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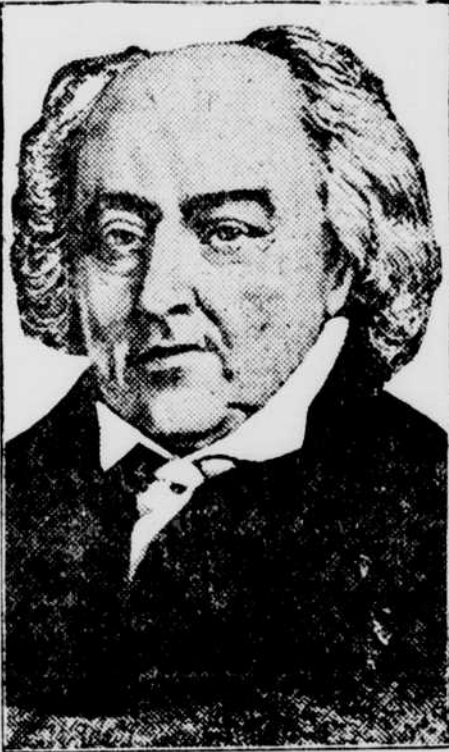
#### JOHN ADAMS AND ABBY

1735—Oct. 19, John Adams born, Braintree, Mass.  
1755—Graduated at Harvard.  
1764—Married.  
1774-77—In Congress.  
1775-85—On Mission to France.  
1785-88—Minister to England.

A SCHOOLGIRL complained that American history was so "littered up with Adamases" that she couldn't tell one from the other. Yet this most distinguished family in our national biography lived in America one hundred and fifty years before it broke into fame.

When the engagement was announced of John Adams of Braintree, Mass., to the daughter of Parson Smith of the adjoining town of Weymouth, people were shocked that Abby should marry so beneath her station. Was she not a Quincy and a Norton? And John, the son of a small farmer, was put down to fourteenth place among his twenty-four classmates, when Harvard catalogues were made up according to social rank. After that he taught school in Worcester to get enough money to study law, and the strictest of the Puritans looked on lawyers as ungodly.

Father-in-Law Smith was game, and tradition says that he preached down



John Adams.



Abigail Adams.

which really had passed under the control of Hamilton, who presumed to direct the new administration, very much as a Tammany boss puts a Tammany mayor through his paces. As Adams never had succeeded in ruling himself it was impossible for another to rule him.

Like aristocracies everywhere, the Federalists were thrown into a state of panic by the French revolution and by the rise of the Jeffersonian democracy in our yet aristocratic republic. In their alarm they frantically rushed through congress the alien and sedition acts, which became only millstones about their necks, sinking their party forever. Not satisfied with shutting the revolution out of the New World, many of them were for joining the monarchical coalition against it in the Old World. In an uproarious quarrel with the absurd French directory, the militia was called out and Washington summoned to command it, after which the president astonished the jingoes by suddenly throwing them over and returning to a pacific policy.

As he had been the first minister to England, John Adams was also the first president to take up his residence in Washington. As Mrs. Adams had been the wife of the first American envoy in London she was also the first mistress of the White House, if for only a few months. On the way from Philadelphia she and the president lost their trail in the wilderness until a "straggling black" came to their assistance.

The capitol was yet unfinished, and out of a desolate bog, far off, the unfinished White House rose to view. There was neither a fence nor a tree about the structure, and the president's nearest neighbor dwelt half a mile away. Mrs. Adams had a hard time to get wood enough to keep her family warm in the big, bleak mansion, and she smiles at us still as her letters tell us of how she hung her washing to dry in the great east room.

After sitting at his desk until midnight hastily signing appointments, to forestall his successor, Adams drove out of Washington at the dawning of the day of Jefferson's inauguration. He had no smiles to bestow on the triumph of his rival, and few enough to light his own pathway, through his remaining years.

After his brave, good helpmeet had been taken from him, he lived on eight years more, lived to see what no other ex-president has seen, a son in the White House. At ninety, as he lay dying in the sunset of the fiftieth Fourth of July, we are told that his thoughts turned to the first and most glorious Fourth and that his lips murmured "Thomas Jefferson still survives." The author of the Declaration really had died a few hours before, and in their flight from earth the spirits of the two old patriots of '76 were strangely united again.



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